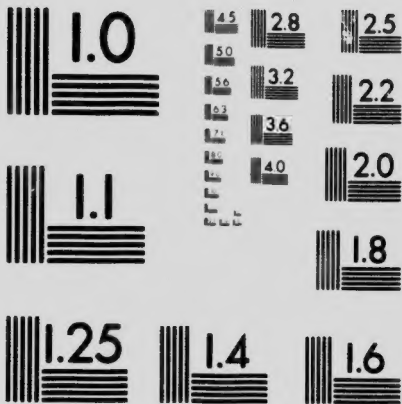




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CHURCH UNION

AS AFFECTED BY THE
QUESTION OF

VALID ORDERS

FROM A PRESBYTERIAN POINT OF VIEW

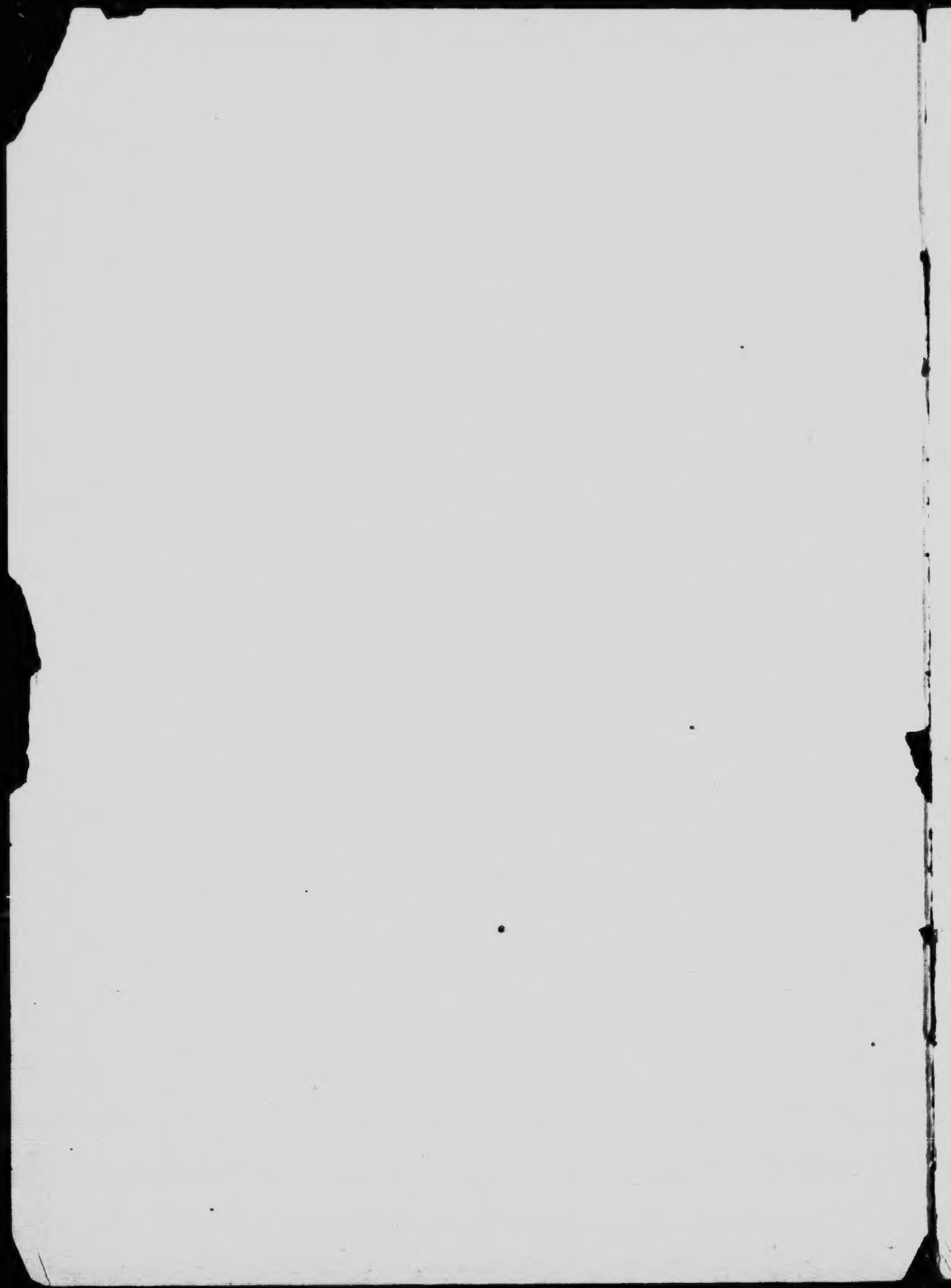
By

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1908?
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PREFACE.

The following pages appeared last summer, in the form of letters to the "Presbyterian Witness" and the "Dominion Presbyterian," over the pen-name of "Pacificus," and a desire has been expressed by some who have read them to possess them in a more permanent form for careful perusal and reference. It also appears to me that the time has come when the subject with which they deal should be fairly and thoughtfully discussed. We should not renounce our ecclesiastical status without clearly understanding what it is we part with, for it can never be regained once it is lost. There is so much supercilious ignorance displayed on both sides in discussing "Apostolic Succession," that a re-examination of the subject in the light of the historic symbols of the Scottish Church, and the scriptural warrants they produce, ought not to be inopportune.

I do not know how many will be sufficiently interested in the subject to read this pamphlet. The editor of one of our weekly denominational papers, who declined, about two years ago, to publish some articles of mine on the "Ministerial Succession," probably estimated correctly the value they would have to his readers when he wrote, in his very courteous letter to me, that he had not so much space to spare for a topic in which none of his readers were interested, adding "Good churchmen, like you and M——, are voices crying in the wilderness." *Placet omen!* The Voice referred to found a good many to listen to him by and bye, and not a few fell into his way of thinking.

I fully appreciate the responsibility I incur in raising the question of valid orders, but I would not be true to my convictions were I not to do so at the present juncture. With the hope that I may be instrumental in drawing the attention of the church to one of the gravest defects of the proposed basis of union before it comes to be discussed in presbyteries, I commit these pages to the candid consideration of my brethren. I would take it as a favor if those who agree in any measure with my views would communicate with me.

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St. John, N. B., January, 1908.

SECTION 1.

The Present Practice in the Reception of Ministers from other Churches.

When applying for admission to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, a clergyman of another denomination is required to state "when, where and by whom he was ordained." (Rules and Forms of Procedure, p. 53). If the General Assembly grants his application he "may be received on satisfactorily answering the questions appointed to be put to ministers and probationers, and on signing the formula." No further ceremony is required. Re-ordination has never been suggested when not explicitly ordered by the supreme court. I think that I am correct in saying that if the certificate of ordination handed in with the application is in order, a minister of an evangelical non-presbyterian church is never re-ordained when received by us.

But what is considered a satisfactory answer to the question "when, where and by whom ordained?" What has the church usually accepted as a regular and valid ordination? What is considered as constituting a man a minister of Christ and a presbyter of His Church? Does the practice of the church agree with the doctrine of her standards? We shall first endeavor to ascertain the present usage of the church, and then we shall examine the doctrine of the standards and test it by Scripture and reason.

So far as the course pursued by presbyteries is concerned, I can speak from more than thirty years of experience, all the time noting the action of other courts as well as that of my own, for the subject has always interested me, and as far as my knowledge goes, any one coming to us from an evangelical Protestant body, Baptist, Methodist or Congregational, has been accepted at once, as far as ordination is concerned, if he could shew that he had been set apart in the recognized form and manner of his denomination. No person has ever raised a question as to the right possessed by the ministers of such churches to ordain other ministers. Their "*de facto*" standing has been recognized and their action homologated as being that of legitimate possessors of the authority they assumed. Leaving out the case of Romish priests, which raises questions of its own, I am not far astray when asserting that the "unwritten law" of presbyteries has been that no evangelical minister requires to be re-ordained.

Let us consider next the action of the General Assembly. The application, endorsed by the presbytery, and accompanied with the relative papers, including the certificate of ordination, is placed in the hands of a committee for examination. This committee is newly ap-

pointed at each Assembly, and has no fixed membership or even permanent minute book. There are no standing rules, nor record of precedents, for its guidance. Absolute consistency of action is hardly to be expected under such circumstances. As far as I can ascertain, not a scrap of any of the documents laid before it has been preserved. The only information to be obtained regarding its procedure is found in the exceedingly meagre reports contained in the Assembly minutes. For the last two years these do not give even the names of the churches from which the newly-received ministers came. It is impossible for one to ascertain authoritatively the principle on which the General Assembly and its committee have proceeded. I can only infer that it is not incorrectly expressed in the "unwritten law" already mentioned.

For a few years (1901-1904) a record of proceedings was kept. At first it is very full and circumstantial, but it gradually becomes extremely brief, and at last, quite useless for practical purposes. I understand that it was forgotten, and not brought to the Assembly in 1905, and no one has troubled himself about it since. I tried to get some of the subsequent manuscript minutes, but could not locate them. I believe they are destroyed. I have, however, gathered a little information from the brief record available. In no case do these minutes state that the committee had documentary evidence of ordination before it, but the date of ordination is generally recorded, and the name of the church from which the applicant for admission came. During this period of five years 66 ministers were received, 44 were from presbyterian churches, 15 were congregationalists, 5 Baptists, 1 Methodist, and 1 church of England. Only in one instance do I find a presbytery instructed to re-ordain, and that is in the case of a person who had received his ministerial status from the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and had spent some years in the Soudan. The reason for this unusual course is not given. There does not appear to have been any doubt of the fact that the Alliance had ordained him. That the C. and M. A. is not a recognized "church" or denomination, may have had something to do with the committee's action, but those who would take part in the designation of its missionaries would all be in good standing in their respective churches and constitute as permanent a body as any Congregational or Baptist council. The considerations influencing the committee were doubtless stated on the floor of the Assembly, but they are not recorded. All that we learn is that the Assembly once drew the line at the C. and M. A., but why we cannot tell. In the Synod rolls for 1905 the date of this gentleman's presbyterian ordination is given, Nov. 22nd, 1904, but in 1906, "April, 1898," is substituted. It would appear that, in contempt of the Assembly's action, the date of the earlier ordination, which had been refused recognition, was inserted in the records.

I cannot find the name on the roll for 1907, and the charge which he served is vacant.

Another instance, of an entirely different character, seems to shew that ordination was not considered by any one as a matter of much importance. Opposite the name of one applicant in 1904 stands the following, "Licensed by a Baptist church in T——, Nov. 30th, 1888." The committee reported him to the Assembly as "a Baptist minister in good standing, from the United States." But I learn from a Baptist brother that licensure by a congregation carries with it no denominational status whatever, any more than an appointment as "local preacher" amongst Methodists. Yet we seem to have accepted it as equivalent to ordination. The clerk of the presbytery which endorsed the application informs me that the entry in his minutes merely states that his credentials were approved and ordered to be forwarded in the usual way. Nothing whatever is said about his orders. Turning to the printed minutes of the Assembly I find in 1905, opposite the name in question, under "Date of Ordination," the extraordinary entry, "Rec. by order of Gen. Ass., Aug., 1904," as if reception constituted ordination. This date is also given under "Date of Induction to present charge." In the minutes for 1906 and 1907, the space is blank under "Ordination," but the same date is continued under "Induction." Am I not warranted in concluding, since these reports are usually filled up by the minister himself, that this brother found it impossible to give a date for an event which had never taken place?

In view of the facts that I have brought out, have I not good reason to ask "Does the Church know where she stands in regard to ordination?" Surely I am not presumptuous if I venture to call the attention of the church courts to this very serious laxity of principle and practice. We shall soon be called to discuss a proposed Basis of Union with other churches whose views on the subject of clerical orders differ materially from those of our standards. Is it not possible that in our ancient and scriptural ministry we have something, the value of which we have too lightly esteemed? If in the ordination we have received in unbroken succession from Reformation, nay, from pre-Reformation back to apostolic times, we have a sacred trust laid upon us which we must not betray, ought we not to weigh carefully the effect of organic union with a ministry which has no such historic continuity, rests upon no such scriptural basis, and places a different value on the ministerial office? The man who, without applying to it the common tests of its genuineness, throws a diamond into the sea declaring that "he doesn't believe" it to be more than a piece of glass, is a Solomon compared with those who renounce their scriptural rank, break their ecclesiastical entail, and obliterate their historic name, without taking stock of the value of these before irrevocably parting with them.

SECTION 2.

The Doctrine of the Westminster Standards Regarding Ordination.

We have seen that the only rule deducible from the church's practice in receiving ministers of other denominations is that those coming from evangelical protestant churches are not re-ordained. I use the word "re"-ordained for convenience, but acknowledge that it is a solecism. There can be no "re"-ordination any more than "re"-baptism. A person is either ordained or not ordained, just as he is baptised or not baptised. I also gave two instances, gleaned from the inspection of only five years, and both occurring in one year (1904), which shewed that even this indefinite and elastic rule was little respected. Let us now enquire further, "Has the church any doctrine on the subject?"

When I read in the Basis of Union (1875), that "The government and worship of this church shall be in accordance with the recognized principles and practice of Presbyterian Churches," and that said principles and practice are to be found "in the Form of Presbyterial Church Government, and in The Directory for the Public Worship of God," I am warranted in assuming that the answer given to my question in these documents is part of the fundamental constitutional law of the church. When all our ministers, at their ordination, solemnly assert before the Searcher of hearts and the assembled presbytery and congregation, that they "own the purity of worship at present authorized by this church," and "undertake to conform thereto," there is surely no mental reservation in regard to the status of the person who conducts the most important parts of that worship, and the manner in which he must qualify himself for the discharge of his office. To say, for example, that the question means that the Lord's Supper is to be observed without any superstitious ceremonial, but that nothing is intended regarding the minister dispensing it, whether he be ordained or not, is absurd. It is taken for granted that only an ordained man may administer the ordinance, is it, then, an unimportant question to ask "How are we to know that he is really ordained according to scriptural principles?" If I find that the official standards of our church, adopted as our constitutional law in the Basis of Union, furnish a clear answer to this question, have I not a right to assume that the test of validity therein prescribed is also "owned" by all our ministers, and that the church ought to order her practice in accordance with it? But if it appears, on a careful inspec-

tion of these standards, that the doctrine contained in them is utterly at variance with the usual procedure of the church, is it unreasonable to maintain that she should either bring her procedure into harmony with her standards, or revise her standards so as to agree with her altered views?

What, then, do the Standards say on the subject?

1. They clearly assert that the ministry of the church is ordained for the performance of certain functions which laymen, or unordained persons, may not lawfully undertake.

The sacraments may not be dispensed "by any but a minister of the word, lawfully ordained" (C. of F. 27, 4). The same rule is repeated under each sacrament (28, 2; 29, 3). This doctrine is reaffirmed in the Larger Catechism, Question 176. A. "The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper agree, in that * * * both are to be dispensed by ministers of the Gospel and by none other." So also in the Directory for Public Worship (p. 293*). "Baptism is not to be administered in any case by any private person, but by a minister of Christ, called to be the steward of the mysteries of God." No one is recognized as taking any part in the administration of the Lord's Supper but the officiating minister (p. 295).

When we turn to the Form of Church Government we find that to the minister belongs also the exclusive right to "bless the people from the Lord" (p. 306), and that various other services, which are formally identical with those which laymen may properly engage in, receive a distinctive character when performed as part of the minister's official duties. In one word, what others may do, he is bound to do, with the added significance which his office gives to his acts, and there are some duties which are exclusively his.

2. If these are the functions of the ministry, what do our standards say about the manner of investiture for the performance of them. A large section of the book, over six pages, is occupied with the topic of ordination. The minister must first be called of God (p. 314), and the genuineness of his call is determined, not by the professed subject of it, but by the presbytery (p. 316, sections 7, 8; p. 317). It is affirmed that "ordination is always to be continued in the church." Since our Lord promised his abiding presence in the church for its complete efficiency, it follows that it always has been observed. It is performed by "preaching presbyters orderly associated" (pp. 315, 316), that is, met and constituted for the purpose, it is "the act of presbytery" (p. 315). Those only are competent to fill the ministerial office who have been ordained by presbyters. None but presbyters, themselves ordained by presbyters, have the right to ordain others. One cannot transmit to others an authority

*My quotations are from the edition of the Westminster Standards, &c., published by Royal authority in 1870, by Johnstone, Hunter & Co., Edinburgh.

which he does not himself possess. "*Non det qui non habet.*" As in apostolic times, the Holy Ghost calls men to the work and the church gives effect to that call. There must be the conjunction of the two factors—the Holy Spirit speaking in the heart of the applicant, and the same Spirit acting through the divinely instituted authorities of the church. I do not say that the Holy Spirit does not call, and work by means of, men who have never received presbyterial ordination. Nor do our standards in the least sanction such a narrow view. But they declare that the scriptural constitution of the ministry, and the rule to be followed in a church which adheres to New Testament principles, is as stated. That the Westminster divines did not overlook the case of an irregular ministry is evident from their carefully considering the validity of Episcopal orders and deciding in their favor (p. 319). This carries with it an implied rejection of other orders as not according to "the pattern shewn in the mount." We may rejoice in the good which our brethren of non-presbyterian churches have been the means of accomplishing, we may without reserve co-operate with them in every philanthropic and Christian work; we may fully recognize them as accepted by the Head and therefore not to be denied a place in the mystical Body; and yet respectfully and regretfully claim that they fail to conform to an ordinance of scriptural and apostolic institution. If our standards rightly formulate the teaching of the New Testament on the source of ministerial authority, can we conscientiously ignore their teaching, and recant our subscription to them, by merging our scriptural and apostolic orders in a union which ignores the principle on which their validity is vindicated?

According to the teaching of all the historic Reformed churches, including our own, the Christian ministry was instituted by Christ himself, and bestowed upon the church as His gift "*ab extra.*" At first the authority was vested in the apostles. It was then transmitted to the "elders," whom they ordained in every church founded by them. From these it has descended in an unbroken succession of presbyters to those who hold the office to-day. The only "apostolic succession" possible, and in fact, is that which comes through an organized church over which presbyters preside. This succession is necessary to a regular and scriptural ministry, if the doctrine of our church, as expressed in her standards, is true. A doctrine which concerns the very essence of the ministerial office cannot be treated with indifference. If there are any of Boeotian mind, afflicted with the "*pingue ingenium*" of that ancient people, who cannot see the importance of well-defined views regarding ordination, here is a fact which ought to make them "sit up and think." A much esteemed minister of our church in the Maritime Provinces, who had been received from the Methodist body without re-ordination, according to

the "unwritten law" referred to in the last section, went to England and was called and settled over a congregation connected with the established Church of Scotland. The question of his ordination was raised when the minutes of presbytery came to be reviewed by Synod, and, on being referred to the General Assembly, it was ordered that "he be ordained," and ordained he was forthwith, although he had been for some months inducted. I have a copy of the minutes in the case. A minister now in charge of a church in Canada, told me that he was present in the Assembly when the case was discussed, and that many very severe things were said of the Canadian church for its laxity in the admission of ministers of other denominations. Surely no one, who is not dead to ecclesiastical self-respect, will be content to leave this question unsettled. Either we should vindicate our procedure, or, meekly accepting the correction, amend our ways. If there is no general interest in this subject an interest ought to be awakened. In taking such a stand, the Church of Scotland declares that my interpretation of our common standards is correct. In what light will she regard the orders of such a united body as it is proposed to form?



SECTION 3.

The Doctrine of the "Supreme Standard" Regarding Ordination.

The Westminster treatises are only the "Subordinate Standards" of our church. They formulate the opinions which we as presbyterians hold regarding religious truth and the constitution of the Church. "The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture" (C. of F. 1, 10). Let us turn then to our "Supreme Standard" and endeavor to ascertain its teaching in reference to the origin and authority of the Christian Ministry.

The only church officers appointed by Christ were the apostles. They were endued with extraordinary gifts, were divinely inspired in their work of teaching and organizing, and exercised plenary authority over all the churches. In every church which they gathered together they appointed elders, or presbyters, (Acts 14: 23), to whom they committed the oversight of the flock, and whom they regarded as called by the Holy Spirit to continue the work which they had begun (Acts 20: 28-31). In writing to the churches they exhort the disciples to shew regard to the presbyters, because they are over them in the Lord, labor for their welfare, and administer wholesome admonition. They are to "esteem them exceeding highly in love for their works' sake" (1 Thess. 5: 12, 13). They are represented as the "Leaders" of the churches, ruling over them, to whose words the people are to hearken, whose faith they are to imitate, and to whom they are to submit themselves, because they watch for their souls under a deep sense of their responsibility to God for the spiritual welfare of the flock (Heb. 13: 7, 17, 24). Double honor is to be shewn to those who are eminent for zeal and devotion to their work, and their reputation is to be carefully guarded (1 Thess. 5: 17, 19). The qualifications of those who should be chosen to this office are fully enumerated in the pastoral epistles (1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Tit. 1: 5-9), and are such as are befitting men who are to hold a position of peculiar authority and moral influence.

As if to shew that the office of presbyter is the highest that pertain to the permanent order of the church, the apostles, apart from their special commission and its supernatural accompaniments, claim to be co-presbyters with those whom they have ordained, they make this common rank a warrant for affectionate, fraternal plain-speaking (1 Pet. 5: 1-4), and they unite with other presbyters in official acts (1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim.

1: 6). Presbyters are included under the title of "ambassadors for Christ," for to them, as well as to the apostles, was committed the "ministry of reconciliation," and they too speak with the voice of God (2 Cor. 5: 18-20). After a careful study of the relation between the apostles and presbyters on the one hand, and between presbyters and people on the other, I cannot avoid the conclusion that presbyters received all their authority from the apostles; were placed over the people, who were required to give them respectful and affectionate obedience; were intended to take the place of the apostles in ruling the church and ministering to the flock in holy things; and were, as truly as "the Twelve," Christ's ambassadors, proclaiming His gospel, and in His name applying the sacramental seals which He had instituted. They were chosen and set apart by prayer, with fasting and laying on of the apostles' hands. Taking a "conjunct view of" all the evidence, I can come to no other conclusion than that the apostles transmitted to presbyters, designated by the Holy Spirit, the commission which they had received from Christ in person. Thus the first link in the true "Apostolic Succession" was forged.

The forging of the second link we find in the instructions given to Timothy and Titus, whom we understand to be presbyters ordained in the usual manner (1 Tim. 4: 14). Paul himself took part in the ordination of Timothy (2 Tim. 1: 16), and the affectionate relations subsisting between them (1 Tim. 1: 2; 2 Tim. 1: 2) must have been a deep interest to the occasion. Like an old minister giving paternal advice to his recently ordained son, Paul instructs young Timothy in many things pertaining to his work, and, amongst others, takes up the selection and appointment of presbyters. A pen portrait of a true bishop, or presbyter, is given (1 Tim. 3: 2-7), and he is cautioned against hasty action in ordaining any, for the trust he has received must be committed to faithful and competent men (1 Tim. 5: 22; 2 Tim. 2: 2). Similar instructions are given to Titus (1: 5). Here are two presbyters, but one degree removed from the original source of ministerial authority, instructed by an inspired apostle to continue the succession of their office by ordaining others to it. We find no instructions given to the laity regarding the perpetuation of the ministry. Nowhere is the church in general advised to choose out suitable men and elevate them into the presbyterate. There is not the slightest hint of such a procedure. "The Seven," it is true, were elected by the people (Acts 6: 1-6), but it was to an office in which they really acted for the people, and the object in adopting this mode of procedure was to give confidence in the administration of benevolent funds, and relieve the apostles of matters which did not pertain to the apostolic or presbyterial functions. When an apostle was chosen the election was by lot, and God was regarded as appointing

His representative. I claim, then, that in those presbyters ordained by Timothy and Titus, we have a sample of the third link in the succession. Here the inspired record closes, but when we open the writings of the apostolic fathers, some of whom heard the gospel from the lips of those contemporary with the apostles, and were brought up in churches founded by them, we find everywhere the order prevailing which is here set forth. Presbyters, or bishops, alone bear rule, this they do by a divine sanction, and the people are urged to treat them with love and reverence because of their office.

We conclude, therefore, that the scriptural view is that presbyters are apostles so far as apostles were presbyters; that the apostles bestowed upon the first presbyters so much of their prerogatives as were transmissible; and that presbyters are the appointees and representatives of Christ, their status as His ambassadors being, as far as possible in the nature of the case, identical with that of the apostles. In no sense or degree do they derive the authority to exercise their office from unordained men.

We are not called upon to prove that the succession has remained unbroken to our time. The burden of proof must rest upon those that assert it to have failed. There is no evidence that the church as an organized society, governed by its presbyters, has ever ceased to exist. I have, however, sound scriptural reasons for believing that such a break in the church's continuity is impossible. My first is the promise of our Lord on the eve of His ascension. "All power has been given (*aorist*) unto me, &c." (Matt. 28: 18-20). The command is clearly to the church of succeeding ages as well as to the apostles personally, for the duty enjoined is age-long, extending throughout the whole of the present dispensation. The apostles are encouraged to enter upon the performance of it by the assurance that the presence of the Master, to maintain the church's equipment and efficiency, will be as real to the end of time as it was to those who heard His voice. The power which had received as "Head over all things to the Church" is a guarantee that He will never permit her to be shorn of any of the endowments which He has bestowed upon her for her work of the world's conversion. If the gospel ministry is as necessary now as in the apostolic age, and ever has been necessary in all the intervening centuries, we may be sure that it never has failed. "His word cannot pass away."

In the second place I find that the gifts and agencies bestowed upon the church, by which she is enabled to fulfil her mission, were conferred once for all at the outset. We read "God hath set some in the church, &c. (1 Cor. 12: 28). "He gave some to be apostles," &c. (Eph. 4: 11-13). In both these cases the tense of the verbs "set" and "gave" (*aorist*) indicates an act completed at a definite past time. The church received

the gifts enumerated, when she was first instituted, as an endowment, to be preserved as a heritage. Some of these have ceased, because their purpose was served, others are, in the nature of things, perpetual, because they are necessary to the life and growth of the mystical Body, "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry unto the building up of the Body of Christ." In the darkest days of the Church's history these cannot have failed, for then "the gates of Hades" would have "pre-vailed" against her. There is no provision made for meeting such a calamity; its possibility is not contemplated in scripture.

In the third place, the analogy frequently drawn between the ministry of the New Dispensation and that of the Old indicates that the same principles obtain in the constitution of the one as in the other. In both it is an axiom that no one has a right to act for God unless directly called of God (Heb. 5:4). It is prophesied of the Messianic kingdom that in it there should be ministers of religion divinely chosen as were the priests and levites of the old (Isa. 66: 21). The right of the ministry to temporal support is based upon the provision made for those who served the altar under the Mosaic institutions (1 Cor. 13: 14), and it is intimated that it is possible, under the gospel, to commit the sin of Korah (Jude 11), which we know to have been a refusal to recognize the divine appointment of Aaron as God's priest on the ground that "all the congregation is holy." As the Aaronic and Levitical orders were divinely instituted and providentially preserved, according to the principle of succession governing them, until they had fulfilled their mission, so the ministry of the Christian church has the same divine origin, is governed by its own divinely ordered principle of perpetuation, and will be maintained intact until the close of the dispensation to which it belongs.

If any one doubts that the view I have defended is genuine old-fashioned presbyterianism, let him read any of the treatises against Independency, written by the Westminster divines and their contemporaries, or if a later writer is preferred, let him turn to Dick's Lectures on Theology, or Hill's Lectures on Divinity, and in Lecture XCIX of the former, and in Book VI, Ch. II, section 2 of the latter, he will find it clearly stated. These were the text-books on theology in our colleges until supplanted by the work of Dr. Hodge about thirty years ago. I am ready to give a "*catena patrum*" back to the Reformation if necessary, but it is surely superfluous to prove what no one who is familiar with the subject will deny. American Presbyterianism has been saturated with Congregationalism from its beginning, and so does not "ring true" on this point.

SECTION 4.

An Appeal to the Soberminded.

Dr. Samuel Miller, in his work on "The Christian Ministry," when closing his argument against episcopal succession, thus writes:—"If we may believe the advocates of uninterrupted succession, the monsters of impiety and profligacy, who, at different times, filled the papal chair, and the seats of bishops, of which characters the pages of ecclesiastical history are full, were the true and genuine successors of the apostles; whilst thousands of the most learned, pious, devoted, and exemplary divines that ever lived, men of whom the world was not worthy, were impious intruders on functions to which they had no legitimate introduction, and all their ecclesiastical acts so many impious nullities, can these claims be admitted without rebellion against the King of Zion?" This, I submit, is not argument, but declamation; it is not an appeal to reason, but to prejudice and passion; it will not influence the sober-minded, but it will inflame the fanatical. It is an example of the logical fallacy of an equivocal middle term. In one sense, they are not the legitimate successors of the apostles, in another, they are. Will anyone deny that it is possible to hold a valid commission in the army and yet be ignorant, inefficient, or even a traitor? The facts that the commission bears the royal seal, was given in good faith, and was received with a solemn oath of loyalty and service, aggravate the guilt of the unworthy officer, but they make his acts as an officer valid. Did not Paul command Christians to "honor the king" when Nero wore the crown? Did he not tell us that "the powers that be are ordained of God," and that those who "withstand them, withstand an ordinance of God?" Authority may be perfectly legitimate when it is most abused. Of this we have a notable example in the scribes and pharisees of our Lord's day. Knowing them thoroughly, and denouncing them in terms that make the reader tremble, Jesus, nevertheless, acknowledged that they "sat in Moses' seat" and said, "all things, therefore, whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe" (Matt. 23: 3). He fully acknowledged the legitimacy of their authority while He denounced their hypocrisy.

We do not dwell with pleasure upon "the dark ages," that chaotic period out of which were evolved the intellectual and moral order and freedom of modern days, but an outstanding fact of its history is that the chief barrier in that period against tyranny, oppression, ignorance, lust and cruelty, was the much-maligned mediæval church. She could not have been wholly untrue to her beneficent mission. There must

have been everywhere hosts of godly presbyters in the true apostolic succession of doctrine and character as well as of office. The reformation in Scotland was an insurrection against the monastic orders, not against the parochial clergy. Although, but a few led the movement, yet, when the change was seen to be inevitable, the great mass of the old priesthood accepted the Reformed faith and became pastors and readers amongst the people to whom they had formerly ministered. No one dreamed of "re-ordaining" them. I appeal to the candid judgment of soberminded students whether the church, which could give birth to the Reformation, was not one that vindicated the legitimacy of its descent from apostolic presbyters. In no case did the reformers declare that they "came out of" the corrupt national church, but they vehemently asserted that they had only purged the ancient establishment of its Romish superstitions and tyranny, restoring its primitive purity and freedom. Knox and his contemporary reformers indignantly repudiated the charges of heresy and schism; declared their hearty adhesion to the ancient and Catholic creeds; wrote on the title-page of their records "The Book of the Universal (i. e. Catholic) Kirk," and vindicated their right to rule and ordain by the powers they had received when made presbyters in the unreformed church. The Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly took the same ground, they repudiated a sectarian name and, denying the title of "Catholic" to the corrupt papal church, declared that they were members of the Catholic Church in Scotland reformed. (See Sprott's "Book of Common Order," p. lxvii).

We have finally to consider the attitude which our doctrine requires us to take in regard to the ministry of modern evangelical denominations, and in the first place, with reference to the reception of individual applicants into full ministerial standing, is it too much to ask that the written be substituted for the "unwritten" law? The only course consistent with the presbyterian view of the ministry and its functions is the one laid down in our standards, namely: To admit no one to the office of presbyter who has not been ordained by a presbytery, or according to the manner of the Church of England, which is virtually by "preaching presbyters orderly associated." It is not unreasonable to ask those desiring to unite with us to accept our doctrines, and it ought not to be felt humiliating to shew that they do. The view which we take of the origin and powers of the ministry determines our conception of the church as a specifically divine institution, or as divine only in a figurative sense, and differing in degree, but not in essence, from other beneficent organizations providentially raised up for the good of humanity. Surely those who think this distinction vexatious and frivolous are not properly seized of its significance. The course pursued by the Canadian Church, for I do not know how long, is flagrantly inconsistent with its own constitution, and dishonoring to the ministerial office itself.

Whilst we have a right to require that individuals shall simply accept of our doctrines, government and usages, the situation is changed when we come to treat with other communions in their corporate capacity. In this case we are rightly called to make all the concessions necessary to agreement that are possible without sacrifice of principle. How far may we modify our demands in regard to ordination without imperilling the succession of legitimate authority?

One exceedingly unsatisfactory condition in the negotiations with Congregationalists is that they have no corporate unity themselves. Their Unions are mere conventions, repudiating any authority to act for, or to control the actions of, the individual ministers and congregations represented in them. The Joint Committee may make every concession to the members of that denomination who sit with them, and yet fail to satisfy any, or all of the rest. Their whole weight in discussion has been devoted to the practical elimination of definite doctrinal statements and creed subscription, and loosening as much as possible the bond of authority amongst the church courts of the new organization. Their view of the church and its ministry is diametrically opposed to that of presbyterians—there is no middle ground. If, as they say, any number of believers may form themselves into a "church," and, selecting one of their number, confer upon him the power of performing ministerial functions, the authority for this procedure must be found elsewhere than in the New Testament. It is true that an Independent congregation, or "church," usually invites a number of pastors to meet with it, and to "lay hands upon" the man whom they have chosen. But this is not an "ordination" in the conventional and scriptural meaning of the term. It is merely a fraternal recognition, carrying with it a denominational standing, but conferring no powers which are not possessed independently of it. So fearful are some Independents that undue significance may be attached to ordination that, like the late Charles H. Spurgeon, they refuse to submit to any such ceremony. There are more unordained pastors amongst English Congregationalists than in any other body. The minister thus "ordained" is not the representative of Christ, save in a general and metaphorical sense, for those who set him apart had not Christ's commission to act in the matter. Traced back but a short distance, the orders of the ordainers themselves would be found to have originated with some one who either assumed the office, or received it by the vote and appointment of unordained persons, commonly styled laymen. To unite on equal terms with Congregationalists, without safeguarding our doctrine for the future, would be an implicit abandonment of our confessional position.

The position of the Methodist ministry is slightly different. John Wesley did not empower any of his preachers to dispense ordinances.

It is true that he did ordain some individuals to the presbyterate, but his doing so only makes it clearer that the great mass of Wesleyan preachers at first received no recognition as ministers of the gospel in the full sense of the term. It is well known that Wesley censured very severely those who attempted to discharge what he termed, priestly functions, i. e., the functions of presbyters. It was not until 1836 that the Conference began to ordain, and by that time all who had been clergymen of the Church of England had passed away. Whether Wesley really possessed the power he claimed, as a New Testament bishop, to ordain those whom he thus set apart, is a very debateable question. He was a clergyman of the Church of England, and under vows of obedience to his bishop and ecclesiastical law. He had no right, without renouncing these authorities, and separating himself from that church, to perform functions which were forbidden to him by the discipline to which he owed submission. His action was, to say the least, entirely irregular. It is simple historic fact that Wesleyan orders, as conferred today, were self-assumed by those who inaugurated them in 1836, and those of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States rest upon the doubtful action of Wesley, and those presbyters of the English Church who united with him, in ordaining the Superintendent and "Elders" who organized that body.

On the other hand, Methodists do not hold the low views of Congregationalists in regard to the ministerial office. They would, I believe, willingly concur in all that our standards teach regarding its sacred functions. In uniting with them we would receive a reinforcement of spiritual life and energy, and the union would not be uncongenial. Congregationalism stands for latitude of belief and a minimum of authority, but Methodism gives no uncertain sound on the cardinal truths of salvation, and loyally maintains the close articulation of church courts and the subordination of all to a supreme court.

I am very far from regarding our evangelical brethern as "intruders," whose "ecclesiastical acts" are "so many impious nullities." I gladly receive them as honored brethren in the Lord, called by the Holy Spirit to their work, and as fully and effectually ministering to the edification of the Body of Christ as the saintliest presbyterian. I have no hesitation in exchanging pulpits with them, for I believe that Christ has accepted them, and therefore, I have no right to refuse them the most complete fellowship consistent with the affirmation of my own belief. My attitude towards them is analogous to that of the Baptists towards them and us. They fail to conform to one of our Saviour's institutions, and so I cannot but regard their orders as irregular. That, as far as we can see, the Master's presence and blessing rests with them as really as with us, does not prove that the original constitution of the ministry has been

abrogated. The Holy Spirit does not surely intend to throw discredit upon the order He Himself established by the hands of the apostles. It only proves that the gospel is always "the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes," no matter by whom it is preached, much more when godly men, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, act as the stewards of God's mysteries of truth and blessing. As a Baptist considers that we have not obeyed, what he believes to be, a divine ordinance, namely, believer-baptism by immersion, and therefore, while according to us all love and honor as brethren in Christ, conscientiously declines to admit us into ministerial fellowship, so do I regard, and similarly would I act towards, those brethren of the Methodist and Congregational communions who have not the necessary continuity of office.

When forming corporate union with these bodies, the form of ordination might be dispensed with. Recognition of their "*de facto*" standing would be sufficient. They already have all that is symbolized in the rite, and their amalgamation with us would engraft them into the historic stem. Ordination is superfluous, and could not but be misunderstood and regarded as humiliating; moreover, the mere outward rite would receive an undue emphasis. But unless the doctrine of our standards becomes that of the united church, and there is an explicit stipulation in the union contract that for the future the practice of the church shall conform to it, I do not see how any presbyterian, of the Westminster type, can come into the union. Very many much more important questions may be left open, because they treat of inferences drawn from statements or facts which all parties acknowledge to be true. But this concerns the doing, or not doing, a certain thing. If our standards rightly formulate the teaching of the New Testament, no one may assume the office of a presbyter without presumption, and no one may confer the office upon another unless he has himself received it. What possible room for compromise is there in the case?

I feel very deeply the importance of raising this question now. The views I have expressed I have held for over thirty years. I would never have become a presbyterian minister if I had not found the church's doctrines in accordance with what seemed to me the clear teaching of the Bible. I have never pressed my opinions upon the notice of my brethren before, because there was no special reason for doing so. But now I must speak, when the banns are proclaimed, or forever hold my peace. Silence now would be unfaithfulness to my convictions, and would bar me from the action which I must take in the event of a union on the suggested basis.